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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALMATY 004281

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN, J. MUDGE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: RUMORS OF ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE  
SPARK PUBLIC ANXIETY

REF: ALMATY 4144

Classified By: DCM Mark Asquino, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: A series of ill-advised public statements by Kazakhstani law enforcement authorities regarding the potential for violence connected with upcoming Kazakhstani presidential elections has significantly increased the level of public anxiety, at least in Almaty. The comments appear to have alarmed a public already on edge after the November 12 death of a controversial opposition figure. Post is using every opportunity to urge restraint and promote dialogue. End summary.

12. (C) Senior Kazakhstani law enforcement authorities have made vague but loud public announcements about alleged plans for post-election violence. The Ambassador has raised this over the course of this week with the Minister of Internal Affairs, Chief of the Presidential Administration, the Secretary of the Security Council, and the Procurator

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General, urging them to lower the rhetoric on the grounds that it is more likely to encourage, rather than discourage, unlawful and possibly violent reaction to the election results. All four interlocutors said that they had concrete evidence that specific individuals were planning provocative post-election acts of violence.

13. (C) Security Council Secretary Utemuratov said that "operative measures" had produced transcripts showing clear planning in this regard. He said there was no evidence that the major opposition leaders were implicated in this, and added that suspicion was focused on second-level FJK leaders Kozhakhmetov and Tokhtasinov, both of whom have a street reputation somewhere between radical and hot-head. (Note: FJK leaders, including Zharmakhan Tuyakbay and Oraz Zhandosov, have repeatedly denied any such intentions and have pledged to address any grievances peacefully. Tuyakbay issued a public statement calling on the government to back up the assertions with concrete evidence and arrest anyone known to be plotting violence, or cease making statements that create public anxiety. End note.)

14. (C) Interior Minister Mukhamedzhanov told the Ambassador that members of a youth group in Taraz (southern Kazakhstan) had been arrested for criminal activity such as arson, and investigation had implicated an additional suspect who had financed this activity and who was planning post-election "illegal" actions. The Ambassador urged the MVD to focus on clearly illegal activity and to restrain its rhetoric, which was having a negative impact on Kazakhstan's foreign reputation as well as increasing domestic tensions.

15. (C) With the Procurator General, the Ambassador urged restraint in dealing with any post-electoral peaceful demonstrations, regardless of whether they were "legal" or not. The Procurator General said that it went against Kazakhstani traditions to engage in violence, and that he recognized that it was necessary to allow opponents to "let off steam."

16. (C) The opposition has leveled countercharges in response to the repeated GOK allegations. In a December 1 posting in the "Rumors" section of mizinov.net (the successor site to Navigator), opposition activist and independent journalist Sergey Duvanov alleged that law enforcement authorities were planning a provocation on December 2 in Almaty. Duvanov claimed that protesters would set cars on fire and rob stores. The police would disperse the crowd and arrest a few participants, who would say the opposition had paid them to create an incident. (Note: On Friday evening, rumors are circulating that four cars are on fire near the Ramstore on Timuryazev in Almaty and/or on Republic Square. Post has dispatched the mobile patrol to verify. End note.)

17. (C) The charges and countercharges have had a dramatic effect on the level of public anxiety, at least in Almaty. Post has issued an internal security notice and a warden message to address the numerous rumors of possible violence. Conversations with Embassy staff, taxi drivers, and household staff reveal a significant level of concern about the coming

weekend, with some individuals hesitant to leave their homes.

18. (C) These allegations and countercharges are building on a wave of public anxiety in Almaty resulting from the November 12 shooting here of former GOK official-turned- opposition figure Nurkadilov (reftel). Although there is no evidence that the murder was politically motivated, the public perception is that it was intended as a warning. (From whom and to whom the warning was directed is the subject of much debate.) A November 29 quote from an anonymous MVD source

that the death would be ruled a suicide has fueled public speculation of a cover-up. The same day, Nurkadilov's widow's lawyer held a press conference to reveal what he claimed were details of the death that ruled out suicide, including the fact that the body was covered with a sheet when discovered, with the gun on top of the sheet. (Note: In his November 30 meeting with the Ambassador, Mukhamedzhanov said that the investigation, the results of which would be announced after the elections, had determined that Nurkadilov had committed suicide. He was well aware of the public skepticism that would greet such a report, but maintained that the forensic evidence allowed for no other conclusion.)

19. (C) Comment: While we think that the government's concerns about the danger of election-related violence are exaggerated and largely unfounded, we cannot exclude the possibility that a few individuals or very small groups may be considering actions designed to provoke the authorities. The larger danger is that the police would in fact overreact to unsanctioned gatherings and bring about the very disorder that they are seeking to avoid. We will continue to use every opportunity to urge restraint and to promote dialogue.  
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